

## Poison Oak – Leaves of three, let it be!

If you are like many of us you're looking forward to weekends or vacations in the country camping, hiking, swimming and generally enjoying the great outdoors. Don't let a case of poison oak spoil the fun.

Although the exact number of cases is unknown, it has been estimated that about 4,000 California workers seek medical attention for poison oak dermatitis every year. It is one of the leading occupational diseases in California.



"LEAVES OF THREE - LET IT BE"

The oily resins produced by the plant cause itchy dermatitis in sensitive individuals. These resins may be picked up from direct contact with the plants, as well as from contaminated clothing, tools, or pets. However acquired, thorough washing of the affected area as soon as possible with soap and water may prevent or decrease the severity of the dermatitis. Poison oak is not contagious where it can spread on its own. There are no oils inside the blisters.

### Here are some tips for preventing poison oak dermatitis:

- Learn to recognize the plant. Poison oak has leaves consisting of three leaflets with prominent veins and a shiny surface. The color changes with the growing season from red/green in the spring to dark green in the summer, turning back to red and orange in the fall. It can grow as a bush or a climbing vine wrapping itself around the trunks of trees.
- Avoid contact with the plant or with anything that has touched it whether it is pets, clothing, or tools.
- If you have to work or enter areas where there is poison oak, wear protective clothing such as long pants, long sleeves, gloves, or anything to protect your exposed skin from the plant and its products. Wash your hands and exposed skin frequently.
- As soon as possible remove and wash any clothing that has contacted the plant to avoid spreading the oils. Be sure to wash any tools or other items that may have contacted the plant. The oils can stay on tools and clothing for a long time creating an exposure source for others.
- Never burn poison oak, instead bury the plants.
- Even when dormant in winter the plant can cause dermatitis if the stems are broken, cut, or handled.
- Herbicides can be effective when applied appropriately.

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P.O. Box 168037  
Mail Station 13  
Sacramento, California 95816*

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## Headquarters Office of Safety and Health

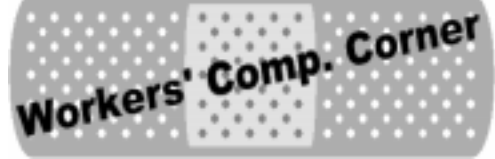
## Heat Stress !

Heat can be a serious hazard for all of us. Our bodies build up heat when we work hard or play hard. Sweating is our body's way of getting rid of extra heat. However, sometimes if you are in high humidity, direct sunlight, playing sports, laying hot asphalt, or lifting heavy loads, your body may not cool off fast enough.

Too much heat can make you tired, nauseous, give you a skin rash, hurt your job performance, and increase your chance of injury. This heat stress can lead to:

- Dehydration - When your body loses water, it cannot cool off fast enough, much like running your car low on coolant.
- Cramps - You can get muscle cramps from the heat although you drink plenty of water because the water dilutes the needed salts in your muscles.
- Heat exhaustion - You feel tired, nauseous, head-achy, and light-headed. Your skin is damp and may look pale or flushed. Body temperature may be normal or only slightly elevated. You may faint or vomit.
- Heat stroke – The most serious of health conditions suffered in the heat is when your body cannot regulate its temperature and sweating becomes inadequate. You may have hot dry skin and a high temperature. You may feel confused or delirious. This is the crisis stage and death can occur without immediate treatment.

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### Prompt / Accurate Reporting of Injuries Remains Crucial

**Report all injuries to your  
supervisor by the end of shift!**

#### REPORTING ABSENCES DUE TO A WORK RELATED INJURY/ILLNESS

**Injured Worker** - All absences must be reported to your supervisor. All absences must be charged to leave credits. If you have insufficient leave credits to cover your absence, your time must be reported as dock. Once time off has been authorized by the State Compensation Insurance Fund (SCIF), appropriate leave credits will be restored.

**Supervisor's Role** - To ensure that injured employees are paid correctly, absences due to work related injuries must be reported properly on their time sheets, 634's, etc. Absences reported timely, ensures correct payroll and restoration of leave credits. If you have any questions regarding the reporting of absences for an injured worker, please refer to the Departmental Safety Manual, Chapter 10, Section 10.10.

### SAFETY MEETINGS

How often are you attending a safety meeting? The law requires field employees to attend every 10 working days. All other employees must participate at least quarterly (4 times a year).

**Document all meetings!**

# SAFER DAYS & HEALTHIER WAYS

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## Poison Oak -



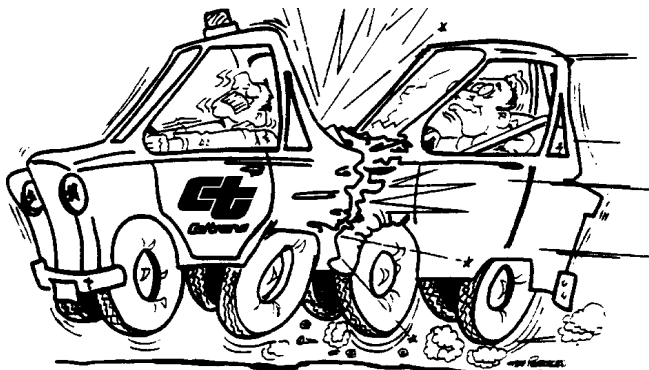
According to the State Medical Officer, shots for poison oak are not as effective as prevention. At one time it was thought that the extract from poison oak could build up antibodies and serve as a protection against contracting poison oak. Barrier creams or sprays are of only limited value when perspiration occurs or when exposure is heavy. Your best defense remains to avoid contact and wash frequently with mild soap and cool water. If poison oak develops medical treatment with corticosteroids can minimize or eliminate the problem.

With some planning and awareness we can all enjoy a poison oak free season whether we are hiking, camping or working in the great outdoors. Learn to recognize and avoid poison oak wherever you might find it. Teach your children and others what to look for and how to protect themselves from the annoying itch and dangers of contact with poison oak.

**Leaves of Three - Let it be!**

*Many receive advice, but only  
the few wise profit from it.*

- Old Chinese Proverb



CONFUCIUS SAY:  
'WEARING SEAT BELT SAVES FACE!'

## OK, YOU'VE HAD A MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENT,

### SO NOW WHAT HAPPENS????

You are the State driver and it's immediately following the accident:

At the accident scene, keep safety in mind at all times, provide what help you are trained for to any injured, **do not admit fault or make any promises** that the State will pay for any damages. Using the STD. 269 Accident Identification card that should be in the glove compartment of all state vehicles, write down as much information as you can about the accident and other party. Complete and tear off the perforated part and give it to the other driver so they know who you are and how to contact our insurance carrier, the **Office of Risk and Insurance Management**.

Complete the latest revision of the STD. 270 (rev. 3/2000) **immediately upon return to your office**. **If there were injuries to non-State parties or the other party suffered significant property damage**, the **supervisor** must fax an advance copy to the Office of Risk & Insurance Management (ORIM) at 916-376-5277 **or telephone** the accident report to ORIM **within 48 hours** at (916-376-5300).

1. **Complete all** sections of STD. 270
2. **Enter** the Equipment ID number of state vehicle as appropriate
3. **Enter** District and Cost Center numbers (Agency Doc. No.).
4. **Give details** as to be understood by someone who was not a witness
5. **Make** a simple diagram of the accident scene
6. **Obtain** an inspection and estimate of damage from Division of Equipment
7. **Sign** completed form and give to your supervisor

Be sure your supervisor reviews the STD. 270 **and signs it before** faxing an **advance** copy to ORIM (916) 376-5277 and the Caltrans Safety Office.

## **SUPERVISORS TAKE NOTICE!**

**THE REQUIREMENT FOR PROMPT REPORTING OF ALL DAMAGE TO STATE EQUIPMENT CANNOT BE OVERSTATED!**  
**TRAIN YOUR EMPLOYEES!**

# SAFER DAYS & HEALTHIER WAYS

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## ...Heat Stress!

The risk of heat stress depends on many things including your physical condition, the weather (temperature, humidity), how much clothing you have on, how fast you must move or how much weight you must lift, if you are near a fan or there is a breeze, or if you are in direct sunlight. Gradual exposure to a hot environment acclimates the body to the higher temperatures.

### How to Protect Yourself

- Drink cool water frequently before you feel thirsty. Every 15 minutes, you may need 5 to 7 ounces of water.
- Take frequent rest breaks. Rest in a cool, shady spot. Use fans.
- Wear light-colored clothing, made of cotton.
- Do the heaviest work in the coolest time of the day.
- Work in the shade whenever possible.
- For heavy work in hot areas, take turns with other workers, so some can rest.
- If you start a new job in a hot environment, you need time for your body to get used to the heat. Be extra careful the first two weeks on the job.
- If you work in protective clothing, you will need more rest breaks.

If you think someone is suffering heat stroke, move them to the shade or a cooler area, soak their clothing with water or apply cool wet cloths. Use a piece of cardboard or other material to fan the victim to reduce their temperature. If the victim is conscious, give 4 ounces of cool water to drink every 15 minutes. If they refuse water or are vomiting or there are other changes in consciousness CALL 911. This is a life-threatening illness.

We can all work and play safely this summer as long as we take sensible precautions. Do not forget another hazard of summer, UV radiation. Cover up; wear a hat and UV-protective sunglasses. Stay Cool!

### THINK AHEAD !

Too often people plunge into a job without giving a thought to safety. The reasons are many. They may say, "I've been doing this a long time, it's second nature". Perhaps they are in a hurry to get the job done. They may think that it is easier to get help if they need it rather than pre-plan the work. Perhaps it is not a particularly challenging job and figure they don't have to waste time and energy thinking about it.

None of these reasons is valid. There is never an excuse for failing to plan the job ahead of time or to consider the safety procedures required in doing the job right. There is no excuse for an accident. **There are no accidents, only cause and effect.**

### SAFER DAYS

### & HEALTHIER WAYS



Headquarters Office of Safety and Health

JOSEPH C. CURTIS, Chief

CHARLES WHEELER, Editor

*Comments, suggestions, and articles should be sent to the editor, Charles Wheeler at this office, or via e-mail to [charles\\_wheeler@dot.ca.gov](mailto:charles_wheeler@dot.ca.gov), or by telephone at 916-227-2644 CALNET 498-2644.*